PROMENADE

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE

VOL IV ISSUE X

"The purpose of the American Square-Dance Group is to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with those who hold similar views."
Constitution of the A S D G.

PROMENADE

STAFF
Margot Mayo, Editor
assisted by
Stuart Jamieson
Barbara Altstadt
Eugene Wachspress
Bob Trotta

Official organ of the American Square-Dance Group, "Promenade" is published monthly with one special summer issue.
SUBSCRIPTION----- $1.00---- yearly
Single mailed copy---------- 20¢
copyright Feb. 1946 by the American Square-Dance Group, 550 Riverside Dr., N.Y. 27, N.Y. c/o MAYO.....(Mo 2-6114)

Bad luck was certainly a loyal companion to Promenade last month! Boy, I never knew so much really hard and sincere work to go into a project with such a disappointing result. Our stencil-cutters were willing, but inexperienced, and, some stencils had to be re-cut as many as three times.

Then, too, the Production Dept. didn't produce and the circulation Dept. is definitely out of circulation for another six weeks. Judy Altstadt is back in the hospital for another operation, and her job has been handed over to Barbara. Pretty soon, the jobs in the ASDG will become hereditary and will be passed down from the older member of a family to the next in line.

But, to get back to Promenade, the promised cover design never materialized, leaving me, at the last minute, to try to improvise one. And even our mimeographer was in on the fiendish scheme to delay the January issue. He was ill for quite a while, and we're glad that he's recovered now.

Since our group magazine is supposed to be a group project, it is my humble suggestion that a few more members get on the ball and help get the material together.

If you don't already have the useful little Handy Kits, issued by Lynn Rohrbough, you'd better send for a list, what with summer coming on, and the usual camp jobs beckoning. The Kits cover numerous subjects and are invaluable for anyone working with recreation and folklore groups. The address is:

Mr. Lynn Rohrbough
Cooperative Recreation Service
Delaware, Ohio.

In the last issue we inadvertantly misplaced "Topsey" Nell's home and said that she came from Missis sippi. She really comes from Missouri. How such a mistake could be made in Promenade is easily understandable!

NOTES FROM OHIO——

Lynn Rohrbough

There isn't much headline stuff in our quiet country parties. We have carried on with a once-a-month party---drawing a younger group, with a preponderance of the feminine, but have modified our program to give everyone a good time. More than once a lonely war widow has said our parties were the only place a lone gal could go and have a swell time. We've modified the square dances a good deal: using play party games for mixers: introducing a few circle dances and, now and then a long-ways; but the thing all our Ohio old-timers like the best are the squares.

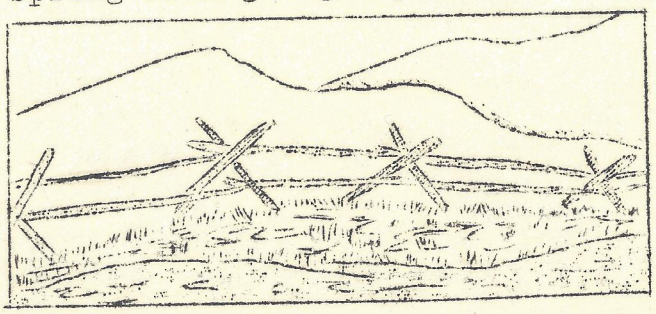
Here's one discovery we've made that I think is important - we stop about two thirds through and bring everyone up around the piano or the fireplace, as the season may indicate, and have a seated program, always with twenty or thirty minutes of singing, and usually, a short short story; or, as we did several times, a tall tale or folk story from some collection such as Botkin's swell book, ("Treasury of American Folklore"); or "Folk Tales of All Nations"; or from Dick Chase's "Jack Tales". I think this break in the strenous evening is the most enjoyable party feature for everyone since many remark about it.

Thank heaven the fellows are coming back and most of them who learned to square dance before the war found chances to dance in England or India or wherever they were: it's sure a key to open doors.

MELLINGER E. HENRY

With the passing of Mellinger E. Henry last month, the folk world lost one of its pioneer collectors of songs and ballads. At a time when transportation through the remote highlands of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky was generally unavailable, and at best travel was an uncomfortable ordeal, Mr. Henry and his wife, Florence Stokes Henry, undertook the task of gathering folk material lost to the world for many years. In the tradition of Francis Child and Cecil Sharp, they uncovered new or forgotten versions of native American songs and English and Scottish ballads, contributing over 1000 such versions to the field of folklore.

Although he was a great admirer of Professor Francis Child's work, Mr. Henry felt that Child had failed to emphasize the importance of the melody as well as the words in ballad collection. His slogan was "a ballad without the air is but half a ballad". The result of these labors and this view point was many volumes including "Ballads and Songs of the Southern Highlands", "Beech Mountain Folk-Songs and Ballads" and innumerable articles for journals in the folk field. It is today virtually impossible to consult any volume on American songs or balladry without meeting references to Mr. Henry's collections. Those of us who today take new delight in hearing and singing the songs of an earlier America owe a deep debt to Mr. Henry and the others, who, like him, tapped the well and kept the spring from going dry.



CHASSEZ THROUGH THE MIDDLE

(Collected at Big Moose, N. Y. by Donald Jamieson in 1941)

Music: A good lively 4/4 tune.

Introduction:

Balance all, all eight swing, that's the style
Grab her and promenade a while.
Halfway round, turn about and promenade back inside out.

Dance:

1) Head couple to the right and buckle up four
circle once round and no more.
2) Take your opposite and chassez through
lady leads through the middle.
3) Swing your partners all.
4) Heads join in the center and once around.
5) Take opposite lady and chassez, lady leads as
6) sides right and left over.
7) Chassez back, sides cross once more.
8) Heads swing corners, then swing partners.
9) Heads out to the left and circle four once more.
10) Take opposite and chassez through, lady in the lead
going inside. Chassez back now, high and wide.
11) Swing your partners all.

Chorus:

Allemande left with your left hand,
Partner by the right and right and left grand.
Meet your partner and swing her once.
Promenade back home.

Repeat for each couple.

Explanation

Introduction:

Partners take two steps away from each other, two steps toward each other and swing.
Partners in skating position walk counterclockwise halfway round the set, turn, promenade back the other way, ladies now on the inside.

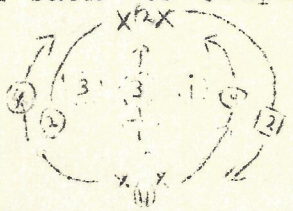
Dance:

1) First couple circles once with second couple.
2) First gent takes opposite lady's right hand in his right as she steps forward so that she is at his right, facing in the opposite direction. They chassez (slide) to the lady's left through the first lady and second gent. Then chassez back.
3) All swing partners.
4) Active couple circles once with third couple in center of the set.
5&6) These two separate figures are done simultaneously. Couples I and III do the Chassez described in (2); while couples II and IV do a regular "right and left" around them. In the "right and left" each moves to his left, passing right shoulders with opposite lady (who has moved to her right.) Having crossed the set, partners meet, and turn without holding hands, the gent backing around and the

CHASSEZ THROUGH THE MIDDLE? Cont'd.

lady going forward, so that they face the inside of the set.

7) "Right and left" back, timing the figure so as to coincide with the "chassez back" of Couples I and III.



8) First and third gents swing opposites, then own ladies and fall back to their own places.

9&10) First couple repeat "chassez" figure with the fourth.

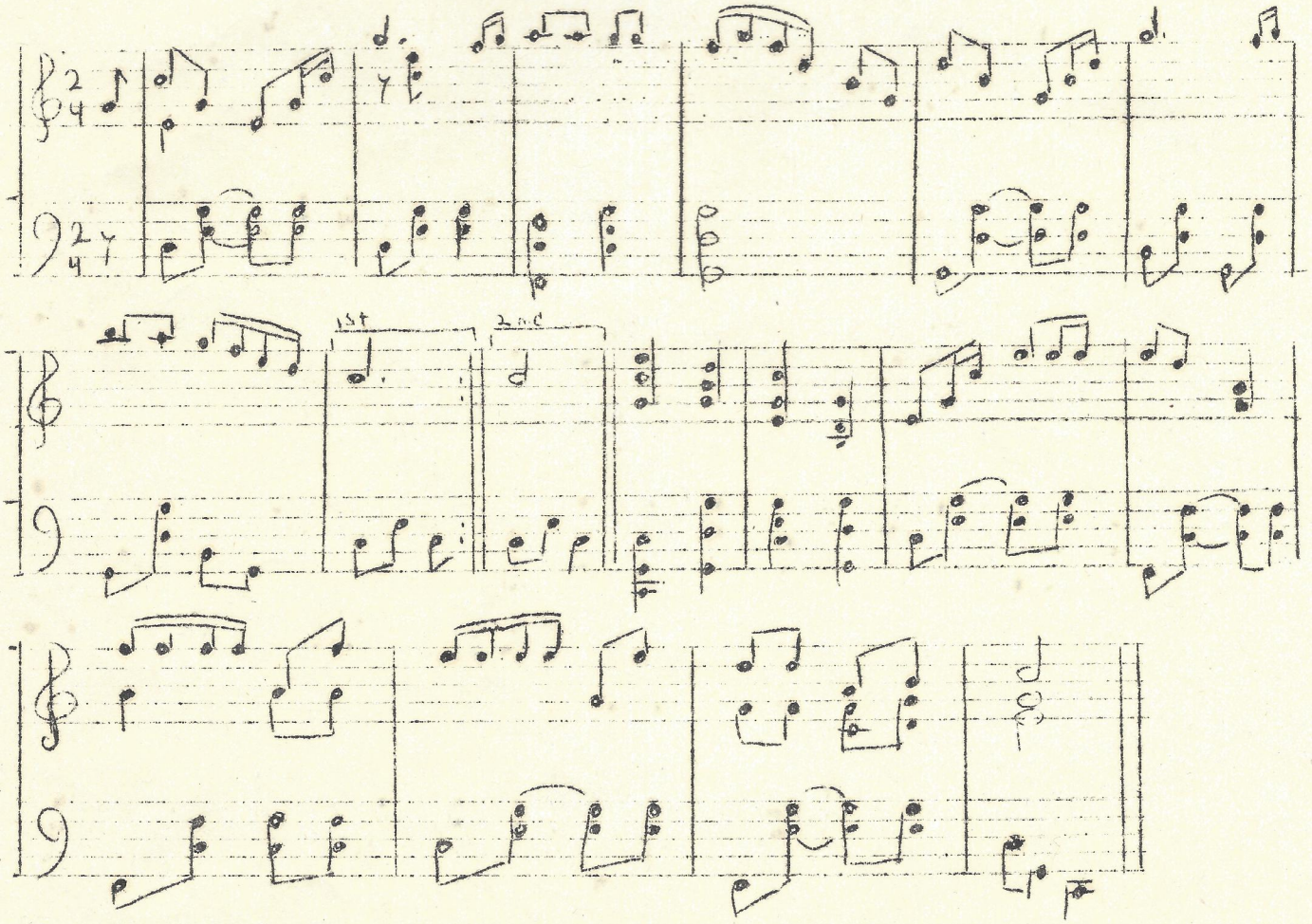
11) All swing partners in place.

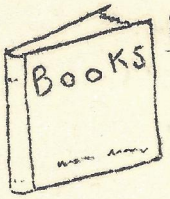
Chorus:

Give left hand to corners and walk around once. Give right hand to partners, walk past, give left to next, walk past and so on till you meet partners. Promenade to place.

FREE FROM CARE

(Collected by Stuart Jamieson from the Mitchel family of Boonville, N.Y.)





HILL COUNTRY TUNES

S. P. Bayard
Archives Publishing Co.
Harrisburg, Pa.
$3.00

This is the first published book devoted to American instrumental folk tunes, as far as I know. It is a book every folk lore fan will want to own. And, it is a must for those who wish to play folk music, particularly the "fiddle". The tunes were collected by Sam Bayard "in the field" and noted down by ear. Mr. Bayard does not pretend that this is the best way to record tunes, but circumstances did not permit the use of a recording machine. However, Mr. Bayard is a competent musician and thoroughly familiar with this type of folk music, and he has carefully edited these tunes to include in some cases the drone effect that is so typical of American fiddling.

Even harmony notes have been included, and signs which indicate slurs and "off-pitch" notes. The background material is enlightening and well worth studying.

Mannerisms of individual fiddlers are discussed and the tuning of the fiddle, which is most important in country fiddling, is discussed at length.

Mr. Bayard gives short biographical sketches of the players from whom he collected the tunes and includes two charming pictures of folk musicians.

There are 95 unaccompanied fiddle tunes presented in this book and in some cases additional variants are given for comparison. The background material that Mr. Bayard has so painstakingly compiled for each tune is by far the most imformative that this reader has ever encountered. And the bibliography tempts one to drop all other interests and begin a life-time of reading. In fact, you find your fingers itching for a fiddle.

Thanks, Sam Bayard, for this excellent contribution to printed American folklore. It is something that has been sorely needed for too long a time. (M. M.)

LAY MY BURDEN DOWN

Edited by Dr. B. A. Botkin
U. of Chicago Press $3.50

Many books have been written about slaves and slavery; some, like "Uncle Tom's Cabin", show the crueler aspects of slavery, while others print a rosy and sentimental picture. And now, before time takes away the last living slaves, "Lay My Burden Down", a collection of their memoires, appears.

Here are the best narratives of the more than two thousand collected from ex-slaves by Federal Writers Project interviewers. Dr. B. A. Botkin, famous for his work in the folk-field, did the editing and selecting. Dr. Botkin has done an excellent job; no phase of slavery has been neglected.

The narratives vary greatly according to the outlook of those interviewed, on such subjects as slave-owners, freedom, and the Civil War. The feelings and emotions "long 'membered", range from pleasant nostalgia to sharp bitterness. Yet, all add up to the one sum - Slavery.

There have long been attempts to minimize the tragedy of slavery. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been regarded by many as an exaggeration or even pure fiction. "Lay My Burden Down" is the answer to the magnolia-scented, happy plantation-life of certain literature and movies.

Here is an answer from those who know and who remember. The ribs of slavery stick out for the entire world to see. "I's hear tell of them good ole days, but I ain't never seen no good times then."

The photographs are exciting, and the jacket photograph by Jack Delano is more eloquent and stirring than any number of words can be. Just a pair of old, weary, wrinkled hands that say as strongly as any tale in the book, "There is something about being free that makes up for all the hardships. I's been both slave and free, and I knows!"

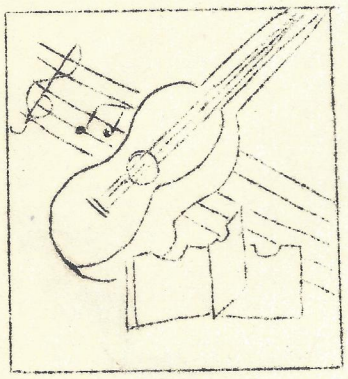
Stuart Jamieson

☆ ☆ ☆

Record_Reviews

Richard Dyer-Bennet (Ballads)
An Asch Release # 461

This album of folk songs, sung as only Mr. Dyer-Bennet can sing them, consists of 6 sides of 12 inch records. It lists for $3.50 and is Ash Release # 461.



Always a fine musician, Mr Dyer Bennet has brought out a new, to us, version of "John Henry," and it is of the best current. He also dips into the 17th Century for "The Three Ravens." (Child Ballad 26.) This is the ancient tragic baddad, from which some versions have deteriorated into nonsense songs about crows and ravens. That old favorate "Barbara Allen" (Child Ballad # 84) is also included. Those who attended the recent Richard Dyer-Bennet Town Hallconcert, will recognize with pleasure two songs he played that night: "I Once Lov'd A Girl"and "Gently Johnny My Jingalo" The latter is the price piece of the album, and probably will be ranked by Dyer-Bennet fans as an all-time favorite.

John Ward has written a very interesting and readable foreword.(The next to the last paragraph where he says, "Folk music? Only universities and New York's night clubs were interested",is very amusing.)

If at first the recordings seem blurred , don't give up hope. If a thin, sharp needle is used and the records played over several times, this apparent imperfection disappears.The album reminds us of a new book whose pages must be cut before the reader can proceed with his reading. But perhaps this is a blessing in disguise, for the more we play these recordings, the more we like them. The songs grow on one and the accompaniments are exciting. This album is certainly a must for any collection.

RADIO

AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Featuring some of America's most outstanding folk-singers and stimulating much interest in all-American music, the Seventh Annual American Music Festival, commemorating the birthdays of Lincoln and Washington, wound up a series of broadcasts over station WNYC on Feb. 22. With a full half hour devoted to American folksongs every day between Feb. 12,and Feb 22., the festival not only gave enjoyment to folk fans, but helped to spread the knowledge of folk music to a large part of the general public.

ASDG members heard with great pleasure many of their old favorites present a well-rounded repertoire of American folk songs. Pete Seegar and Betty Sanders combined their appearance on one program, John and Joan Allison together with Harry McKinlay,filled another half hour. Woody Guthrie, Tom Glazer, Pete Seegar, Leadbelly, Tony Kraber, Oscar Brand, Edith Allaire and Andrew Rowan Summers each appeared. There were also recordings of Josh White who was unable to appear.

The WNEW Folk Festival has been cut to 15 minutes, and now starts at 4:15 P.M. Sundays. We feel it is a great shame to cut down this fine program, in which both singer and audience participated and had a fine time.

WOR presents a transcription of the Coast - to - Coast Joseph Marais program at 8:00 A.M. Sundays, when most of us are still asleep. This program is certainly deserving of a better time than this time pre-dawn to most New Yorkers.

New Folk Song Series--WNYC

Mon. eves: 6-6.15....Betty Sanders
Tues eves: 6-6.30.....Oscar Brand
Thurs eves: 6-6.15.....Pete Seeger
Fri eves: 6.15-6.45.....A S D G!!

Weekly programs through March and April.

ASDGossip____

More and more of our group members are returning from the armed forces. FORREST WATCHEL has returned after several years in the Marine Corps, having served in the Pacific area. BOB TUNICK has come back from the bounding main and exchanged his Navy blues for civilian blues. BOB GOLD and MILT PRATT, two old-time members of the group, reported in recently. Neither of them will be active in the group, for a while at least, since that major problem, earning a livlihood, keeps them out of town.

LEON LUSTERMAN popped into a group rehearsal the other Sunday and danced himself into a state of exhaustion; Ensign ERIC SCHMERTZ, in town for a few days, visited

FELIX LUBLINER arrived in New York just a few days after we received his letter saying he was returning to the states following a sojourn in the Pacific. His stories of life in KOREA and on Okinawa are particularly engrossing, but we're afraid his folktales are unprintable.

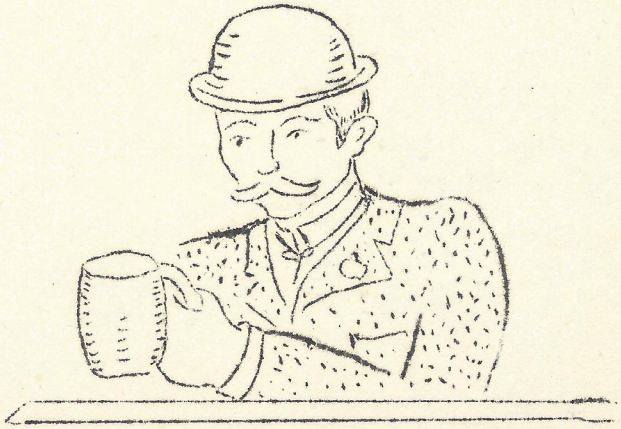
MANNY WIENER finally found that piece of paper he has been looking for these long, long years and has resumed civilian life with gusto and enthusiasm. The Air Corps just couldn't have disagreed with our main caller too violently or else married life is extremely agreeable to him. (How about getting rid of some extra pounds, Manny??) Members of the group are anxious to see the young'un, Ruth Esther, so, Charlotte and Manny, please do us the honor and bring her around soon.

Notes of Interest

Letters from our readers demonstrate the well- known fact that square dancing has really "caught on" in big style all over the nation and we are convinced that it isn't just a fad to be done to death and then buried.

From the west coast comes a report of the Folk Dance Federation of California, which must be a very active organization. Their Research Committee has sent us a copy of "Folk Dances from Near and Far," a very fine book of dances collected by the Federation and we will review it in the near future.

It was good news to hear that HUDDIE LEADBETTER has returned to the fold. It was more than a pleasant surprise to turn on the radio casually and hear Leadbelly's fine voice and famous guitar-playing coming through the ether, directly to us, it seemed. We called him up after the program to let him know how happy we were to have him back again. He's been out in Hollywood, where the climate is warm, but with Spring coming on, he will find New York not too bad.

JOSEPH MARAIS and MIRANDA will appear in a folk song recital in Town Hall on Saturday, March 30. Another of those popular "midnight recitals" which actually begin at 11:15 p. m. Tickets are obtainable at Town Hall.

In line with our remarks at the head of this column we were interested to note that the new magazine "Holiday" featured an article on square dancing in its first issue.